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RUEHSB/AMEMBASSY HARARE PRIORITY 3658
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1520
RUEHTN/AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY 5588
RUEH DU/AMCONSUL DURBAN PRIORITY 9805
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 001000

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SUBJECT: MBEKI AND ADVISORS REVEAL BIAS AGAINST MDC (AND WEST)

REF: PRETORIA 951

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Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Mary Deane Connors. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) British diplomat Marianne Young (protect) told PolOff on 09 May that President Mbeki's chief strategist, Joel Netshitenzhe, has bought Mugabe's argument that the MDC is a western puppet "hook, line, and sinker." Young had just returned from a meeting with an unnamed source in the presidency who told her that Netshitenzhe believes Zimbabwe is a "failed Orange Revolution," and that the U.S. and UK are using "western tactics like trying to cobble together 50 percent for MDC, which obviously did not happen." According to Young's source, Netshitenzhe also believes the arguments made to President Mbeki in Pretoria on 06 May by ZANU-PF negotiators Patrick Chinamasa and Nicholas Goche that teachers at polling stations manipulated the results in favor of MDC.

2. (C) Young also revealed that Minister of Local Government Sydney Mufamadi, a key member of Mbeki's mediation team on Zimbabwe, called the British High Commissioner on 25 April to relay two messages from President Mbeki. The first was that Prime Minister Brown's suggestion that a UN arms embargo be considered was completely unnecessary. The second was that the British should not trust Morgan Tsvangirai. (NOTE: Mufamadi's comments are ridiculous given the timing of his demarche. The UK suggested the arms embargo soon after the South African government approved the unloading and transport of Chinese ammunition destined to Zimbabwe through South Africa. In fact, Mufamadi, who chairs SAG's National Conventional Arms Control Committee, personally approved the transfer. Despite the SAG's public statements that there was no legal basis to deny the license request, civil society groups contested the transfer in Durban High Court on the basis of human rights exemptions in the applicable domestic law, forcing the ship to leave Durban on 19 April. END NOTE)

3. (C) President Mbeki also has recently publicly complained that the US and UK have sought to subvert SADC's mediation efforts and that Tsvangirai has reneged on agreements with him, such as participating in a run-off, at the advice of the US and UK. During a meeting with church leaders on 04 May, Mbeki allegedly called Tsvangirai a "puppet of the west," though Mbeki's spokesperson Mokone Ratshitanga has publicly denied such a statement was made. Earlier today, press

reports also noted that Mbeki has scoffed at the idea of outside observers in Zimbabwe, saying that the suggestion implies Africans cannot run their own elections.

14. (C) In what Post initially interpreted as good news, Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo yesterday spoke out publicly about the escalating violence in Zimbabwe, saying that a run-off under current conditions is not possible. Mamabolo, however, refused to lay blame on either party, saying instead, "Both sides are blaming each other." (NOTE: Mamabolo, who is well-respected in the diplomatic community and leads the South African observer mission to Zimbabwe, has voiced his concerns privately to Pretoria diplomats about the increasing violence. END NOTE) Young's source in the presidency told her that Mamabolo did not want to speak out because he thought it important to stay neutral, but was forced to by the Presidency which wants to provide a counterweight to ANC President Jacob Zuma's statements on the crisis. Young also said that the South African observation team of retired military officers sent in earlier this week to investigate violence was an ANC-led initiative, not the government's (reftel).

15. (C) COMMENT: Mbeki has consistently argued that he cannot criticize ZANU-PF or Mugabe if he wants to be effective as a mediator in the Zimbabwe crisis. However, both his words and actions, as well as those of other South African officials close to him, appear to be anything but neutral. His critical comments of the US, UK, and MDC may be a way for him to reassert himself as mediator and to regain some credibility within the SADC region. Ironically, giving the impression that the only two choices in the crisis are himself or western imperialists also has been Mugabe's (scare) tactic. END COMMENT.

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